BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0367 MARCH 15, 1976
ANITA CHAPMAN

MIKE MANSFIELD INTERVIEW

ANNCR:

AMONG THE WELL-KNOWN AMERICAN POLITICANS RETIRING AT THE END OF THEIR CURRENT TERM OF OFFICE, IS SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD OF MONTANA, FOR THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY LEADER OF THE SENATE. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW HERE IN WASHINGTON HE GAVE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS THIRTY-FOUR YEARS IN CONGRESS, AS WE HEAR NOW FROM VOA'S ANITA CHAPMAN:

VOICE:

MIKE MANSFIELD SERVED WITH SEVEN PRESIDENTS DURING HIS POLITICAL CAREER. HE BECAME LEADER OF THE SENATE MAJORITY WING DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF HIS FAVORITE AMONG THEM: JOHN F. KENNEDY. KENNEDY IN HIS VIEW "OFFERED THE KIND OF HOPE THE COUNTRY NEEDED... AND HE WAS BRINGING THE YOUNGER GENERATION UP INTO THE POLITICAL FIELD, SO THEY COULD BE ACTIVE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE NATION." BUT AS MANSFIELD SAYS, THE ASSASSINATION CUT IT ALL SHORT.

IT WAS KENNEDY'S SUCCESSOR, LYNDON JOHNSON, THAT MANSFIELD CONSIDERS THE GREATEST DOMESTIC PRESIDENT, FOR WHICH JOHNSON, HE SAYS, "GETS LITTLE CREDIT TODAY." VIETNAM IS THE REASON, AND SENATOR MANSFIELD WAS AMONG PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S MOST TENACIOUS CRITICS ON THE WAR IN ASIA. LOOKING BACK, HE CALLS IT "UTTERLY UNCALLED FOR, UNNECESSARY, TRAGIC", SAYING IT COST TOO MUCH EVEN IF IT HAD BEEN ONLY ONE LIFE AND ONE DOLLAR.

SENATOR MANSFIELD HAS SEEN THE POWER OF CONGRESS DIMINSH SINCE THE DAYS OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT, WHEN EVERYTHING BEGAN IN HIS WORDS TO BE "SHOVED TO THE EXECUTIVE." THE TREND WAS REVERSED AS CONGRESS ASSERTED ITS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE

IN THE WATERGATE SCANDALS. BUT MANSFIELD SEES A DISTANCE STILL TO GO TO RETURN TO THE EQUALITY FORESEEN BY THE CONSTITUTION BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES.

ASKED ABOUT SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S RECENT REMARK THAT CONGRESS WAS TAKING TOO MUCH POWER UNTO ITSELF, MANSFIELD DISAGREED. "WE ARE THE ELECTED REPRESENATIVES AND WE MUST REPORT TO THE PEOPLE WHAT WE'VE DONE AND NOT DONE," HE SAYS. SENATOR MANFIELD HOPES TO SEE AMERICA LIMIT ITS MILITARY ROLE IN THE WORLD. THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR LOWERED MILITARY FORCES IN ASIA BY SEVENTY OR EIGHTY PERCENT. BUT HE LOOKS FOR REDUCTION ELSEWHERE, AS HE SEES TOO MANY RESOURCES SPENT ON THE MILITARY PRESENCE. "WE'RE BECOMING," HE SAYS, "A HAVE-NOT NATION IN TOO MANY AREAS."

FIVE ACHIEVEMENTS IN HIS SENATE YEARS GIVE MANSFIELD PARTICULAR SATISFACTION. TWO ARE LEGISLATIVE: THE BILL THAT PERMITS EIGHTEEN YEAR OLDS TO VOTE, AND THE SO-CALLED SUNSHINE BILL THAT OPENS CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS TO THE PUBLIC.

MANSFIELD WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN INITIATING TWO INVESTIGATIONS OF FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCE. ONE WAS THE WATERGATE HEARINGS THAT LED TO THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT NIXON. THE OTHER, THE RECENTLY-CONCLUDED REVIEW OF AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.

SENATOR MANSFIELD IS PLEASED WITH THE RELATIONSHIP HE'S DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS AS SENATE LEADER. OBSERVERS CALL IT A COMPLETE CHANGE IN THE LEADERSHIP SYLE OF THE SENATE. MANSFIELD HAS NEVER BEEN AN ARM TWISTER IN ORDER TO GET OUT THE VOTE, AND YOUNGER MEMBERS HAVE CRITICIZED HIM FOR THIS. BUT HE SAYS: "I LIKE TO BE TREATED BY OTHER MEMBERS AS I TREAT THEM, WITH UNDERSTANDING AND CONSIDERATION." IT HAS WON HIM

THEM, WITH UNDERSTANDING AND CONSIDERATION." IT HAS WON HIM THE HIGH REGARD OF HIS FELLOW SENATORS.

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